Keeping in touch

News and notes from
the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.
5300 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 464-5100.

JUNE, 1991

UFMCC is Sharing God's Blessing with Children

Ministry with children is becoming more important in UFMCC. One sign of this change is that General Conference XV will offer the first children's program ever included in a UFMCC General Conference. It will consist of Vacation Bible School, Music Camp, and a licensed day care center operated by the hotel.

"Our children are a great, important part of our future. We have a chance to help them learn life in such a positive way," said Rev. Karen Gregg, who is organizing the Vacation Bible School on the theme "Sharing God's Blessing." Adults also have a chance to learn much from children, she said.

"We're supposed to come to God as little children," she said. "I observe my children and how they come to God and how they are as human beings, and this has helped me process my inner child and brought healing to my own life."

Vacation Bible School, for children aged 4 to 12, will include time for music, worship, and lots of hands-on activities. Between 15 and 20 children are expected to participate. Parents will pay only a small part of the cost of the program. The rest is being paid for by UFMCC and Conference registration fees.

Rev. Gregg has a long history of ministry in UFMCC, and a love of children going back even longer. "I always wanted to be a mother, but I gave up on the idea of giving birth when I was younger because I knew I was a lesbian. My family would have objected to me having children without being married," she said.

It was not until 1986, after years of UFMCC ministry that she became a foster parent. "Finally this dream that I thought would never, ever come true, became a reality."

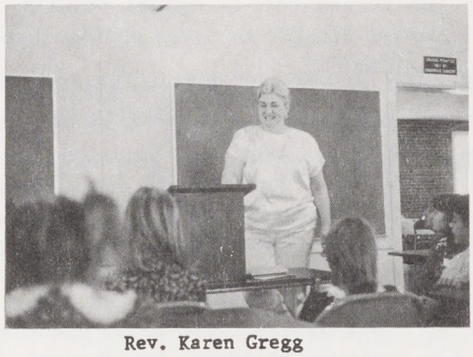
Now she and her partner, Sue Kirkland, have six children, ranging in age from 9 months to 4½ years. (Ms. Kirkland also serves as Southwest District Treasurer.) Three of their children are adopted, two are foster children, and one is under their legal guardianship. Rev. Gregg proudly points out that her children reflect the diversity of creation: Black, Hispanic, native American and white; handicapped and able-bodied.

Rev. Gregg created the children's program at MCC Long Beach in 1987 at the request of the pastor, Rev. Dusty Pruitt. She built it from nothing to the point where it now serves 30 children with classes for four different age groups from toddlers to teens. A modified curriculum from the Augsburg/Fortress Press provides children with inclusified Christian education, free of racial and gender bias.

For example, a recent lesson for children in third and fourth grade began with a discussion of different types of celebrations, then moved into discussion of the Bible story of Passover and then communion. The children then played dot-to-dot and word-find games, assembled a "pray at all times" mobile, and ended the class by preparing and eating a snack together.

"Starting the program was an educational experience for everyone because we're not used to having children in MCC churches," she said, explaining that the unfounded stereotype that homosexuals are child molesters has prevented many MCC members from interacting with children. "We had to train our people to know it's okay to care about children." Lesbian and gay issues are not directly discussed in the children's program, but they are addressed in parent support groups and by guest speakers, such as the adult daughter of a church member.

After a few years heading the program, Rev. Gregg resigned from the Children's Church at MCC Long Beach in order to focus on sharing what she had learned about children's ministry. Anita Gibbons now coordinates the children's program at MCC Long Beach, while Rev. Gregg heads the Southwest District's new Department of Children's Ministry, the first department of its kind in UFMCC.



Rev. Karen Gregg

She is available to consult with congregations about developing children's programs, training teachers, classroom materials and parent workshops. She also leads workshops on parenting, and coordinates children's programs at the Southwest District Conference. Rev. Gregg encourages churches to start children's programs even if they have no children attending. "It becomes a means of evangelism," she said, explaining that parents will join the church once the program is launched.

(Continued next page)

MCC-DC Celebrates 20th Anniversary

MCC of Washington, D.C., celebrated 20 years of ministry with a joyful week of special events culminating May 5, 1991.

The Mayor of Washington, D.C., Sharon Pratt Dixon, joined about 500 people in attending the Candlelight Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance on May 2. The Mayor read a proclamation declaring May 5 to be "MCC of Washington, D.C., Day," then presented it to Rev. Larry Uhrig, pastor.

Rev. Larry Uhrig, pastor of MCC-DC receives a proclamation from the mayor of Washington, D.C., Sharon Pratt Dixon, in honor of MCC-DC's 20th Anniversary. Rev. Candace Shultis, assoc. pastor, watches the festivities.

Children's Ministry (Cont'd)

"People ask me, 'How can you minister when you have so many children?' God gives us the tools we need to do what we're called to do. I just do it, and I'm really thankful. God knows the desires of our hearts and my greatest desire was to have children -- and I have them now!"

How to Get Involved!

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN STARTING A CHILDREN'S PROGRAM...a good place to start is by volunteering one or two hours to help lead the Vacation Bible School at General Conference. Rev. Gregg is also available for Fellowship-wide consultation. She may be contacted via MCC Long Beach, 1231 Locust Ave., Long Beach, CA 90813. Phone: (213) 432-3641.

IF YOU ARE BRINGING CHILDREN TO GENERAL CONFERENCE.. Please pre-register children for General Conference by June 20. Registration is free for children 17 years of age and under. There is no special program for children aged 13-17. Children aged 4-12 are eligible for Vacation Bible School (afternoons) and Music Camp (mornings) Monday through Friday, July 15-19. The licensed day care center is available daily except Sunday for children aged 2-12. UFMCC will subsidize half the costs for children from 2 to 6 years old who are toilet-trained; the cost per child per day is $20.

Another highlight came on Sunday, May 5, when Rev. Elder Troy Perry and Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey preached at separate services. Overall Sunday attendance reached 557, breaking the record of 501 that was set on Easter.

Extensive advance planning helped make the anniversary celebration into a success. "We started planning a year ago, right after the 19th anniversary," said Rev. Candace Shultis, associate pastor. The anniversary activities were coordinated by Leon Hampton, an MCC-DC deacon and president of the Board of Pensions.

MCC-DC got the proclamation from the mayor by approaching the local government and asking for it. Rev. Uhrig has served on District of Columbia commissions, so his ministry was already known to government officials.

The text of the proclamation read in part: "Whereas, the Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, D.C., for 20 years has affirmed its spiritual gifts in the life of the District of Columbia through its participation in ministry programs to feed the homeless, nurture spiritual values in Washington's gay and lesbian community, offer prayer and counsel for the troubled and the lost, care for the sick and dying in the gay community, and preach and practice a theology which proclaims God's love to all people;

...NOW, THEREFORE, I, THE MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, do hereby proclaim May 5, 1991, as "METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WASHINGTON, D.C. DAY" in Washington, D.C. and call upon all the residents of this great city to join me in paying special tribute to this outstanding congregation."

PRAISES

As CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR MCC in Boca Raton, FL, prepares to celebrate its first anniversary, REV. JOHN JACOBS, pastor, reports that "We have 93 members, 23 in lay ministry, 10 in our choir, three care groups, and plans for continued growth in the Lord."

AGAPE MCC of Fort Worth, TX, celebrated its 20th Anniversary on the first weekend in May.

MCC EUGENE, OR, continues to grow. REV. MARGUERITE SCROGGIE reports: "We hosted the International Memorial AIDS Vigil on Pentecost Sunday, are moving to a larger worship space, advertising for a paid minister of music, obtaining the Hymnal Project from MCC-SF and flowing over with the joy and love of the Holy Spirit."

A new work has begun in Indianapolis. JESUS MCC was approved as a new work at the recent Great Lakes District Conference. The congregation chose its name because it stands for "Justified Eternally, Striving Unto Sanctification." JESUS MCC is pastored by REV. STRETCH WEISMAN, who also pastors Whitewater Valley MCC in Richmond, IN.

MCC PHILADELPHIA voted unanimously with one abstention to return its charter and resume commissioned church status. The Mid-Atlantic District Committee celebrates this as an act of faith, spiritual maturity and conscience.

REV. LA PAULA TURNER, executive director of the Department of People of Color, and her family wish to express sincere thanks for the prayers, cards, and gifts in response to her son's death. They helped make a hard time bearable. The "resurrection" result of the experience was that Rev. Turner was able to see all four of her daughters for the first time in 25 years. A new family relationship was born that includes her partner of many years, Rev. Sandi Robinson, dean/Samaritan College.

REV. PAT BUMGARDNER, pastor of MCC NEW YORK, attended the installation of Rev. Joan Campbell as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in New York City May 14.

PRAYERS

DOUG SILVER died of AIDS on May 12. He was the partner of DARYLE ROBERTS, district clerk for the Western Canadian District.

REV'D MICHAEL NIECE, pastor of NEW SPIRIT MCC in Cincinnati, OH, was injured in a head-on collision May 19. He is home recuperating with a severely broken left arm.

REV. ERNIE EDWARDS resigned as pastor of MCC AT MOBILE, AL for reasons of health. Rev. Edwards is HIV-positive. He served the church in Mobile for one year.

REV. MARY MERRIMAN, pastor of VISION OF HOPE MCC in Lancaster, PA, requests prayers for that church as Lancaster's city government struggles over a human rights ordinance. The City Council recently passed an amended human rights ordinance that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation or marital status, but the local Human Rights Commission expressed reluctance to enforce the new law.

In Memory: Rev. Rick Weatherly

Rev. Rick Weatherly, staff clergy at MCC San Francisco, died at 1 pm on May 25. A memorial service was scheduled for June 2.

Rick began his service as clergy with UFMCC in 1979 as worship coordinator of MCC Tidewater in Norfolk, VA. He then served from 1979-82 as minister of evangelism with MCC-SF. From 1982-84, he served as pastor of New Life MCC in Oakland, CA. Rev. Weatherly also served as counselor at the Spiritual Life and Clergy Care Center and on the executive committee of the Northwest District Board of Home Missions.

He received a bachelor of arts degree from George Washington University in 1979 and a master of divinity degree from Pacfic School of Religion in Berkeley, CA in 1982.

Rev. Weatherly became clergy on staff at MCC-SF after reactivating his clergy status. He was very active in recent months as a person with AIDS in the MCC-SF congregation, offering hope and wisdom through his preaching and staff participation. He helped pioneer a regular spiritual support group for people facing chronic illness.

In lieu of flowers, gifts may be sent to the MCC-SF AIDS Ministry, 150 Eureka St., San Francisco, CA 94114.

In Memory: Rev. Stevie Lindic

Rev. Stevie Lindic, staff clergy of MCC Bournemouth, England, died of cancer on April 10. She was licensed to ministry just four weeks earlier.

She joined the Bournemouth church in 1986, and soon became the church's first woman student clergy, serving in care of Rev. Frank Scott. Rev. Lindic was very involved in Samaritan in England. In addition, she ran her own business as a book-seller.

Her funeral was conducted April 15 by Revs. Scott and Neil Thomas, pastor of MCC Bournemouth. They led a love-feast of praise and thanksgiving which highlighted a life of loving service. Rev. Lindic leaves a lover of 17 years, Jennie Donovan, and her mother Coral.

New Pastors and Church Staff

Congratulations to the following churches that have selected new pastors:

MCC LAS VEGAS has elected REV. KEN CATON as its new pastor. His installation service will be June 30, with Rev. Don Pederson officiating. Rev. Caton leaves his current position as associate pastor of All God's Children MCC in Minneapolis, MN, and district music coordinator of the Mid-Central District.

MCC OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA in Falls Church, VA, elected REV. DARLENE GARNER as its pastor May 19. Rev. Garner has been serving there as interim pastor.

MCC CHATTANOOGA welcomes MS. POLLY IRELAND as its new pastor. She officially begins her pastorate June 1.

Congratulations also to the following churches that have hired new staff members:

MCC NASHVILLE has hired REV. VICTORIA MITCHUSSON part-time to serve as a member of the pastoral team, along with Rev. Rod Bragg-Bash, pastor. She brings a special gift of healing and renewal to this congregation.

MCC SAN FRANCISCO hired REV'D. SHARNA SUTHERIN as program director and women's outreach coordinator. Her nine years of experience in ministry include work in ecumenical settings in New York City, Cleveland, and Oakland, as well as work in the American Baptist Church.

ALL SAINTS MCC in Atlanta, GA, has added a part-time administrative assistant, PHIL GRIFFIN, to its staff. The church is also celebrating its 7th anniversary, July 10.

General Conference XV Approaches

Record numbers of people continue to register for General Conference XV, which will be held July 14 to 21 in Phoenix, AZ.

Although the last pre-conference registration discounts expire June 15, onsite registration will be available. A bargain onsite weekend rate for the final weekend will be available for just $100. This covers all events for the final three days of the conference, including the Human Rights Banquet, Variety Show, and a wide variety of forums and workshops. Just a few conference activities are highlighted on this page.

Pictures Needed for Women's Wall

Pictures of women participating in MCC are needed for the Women's Wall at General Conference. The Women's Wall is a display of pictures that is being created by the Women's Secretariat to recognize the gifts and power that women contribute to UFMCC and the rest of the world. It will be on display at the Country Store.

Pictures of women participating at the local, district and Fellowship level should be brought to General Conference and then given to Rev. Bev Baptiste, who is coordinating the assembly of the Women's Wall. Both men and women are encouraged to bring pictures. Contributors are asked to mark each picture with the names, date, and place shown. After General Conference, contributors may pick up their pictures or donate them to the Women's Archives that is being assembled.

Other Groups Prepare to Share Phoenix with UFMCC

Two other major conferences will be held in Phoenix at the same time as UFMCC's General Conference XV.

Both the Episcopal Church and the National Association of Religious Writers are making plans for sharing the city of Phoenix with UFMCC in mid-July.

The Association of Religious Writers responded by inviting Rev. Elder Troy Perry, Founder of UFMCC, to present the keynote address at their meeting on Saturday, July 13.

The reaction of the Episcopal Church has been mixed. An official from the Episcopal Church will bring greeting to UFMCC during a worship service. On the other hand, a newsletter for conservative Episcopalians has issued a warning to its readers. "The Advocate for the Emerging Church," a newsletter of Episcopalians United, said, "The Metropolitan Church will be holding its convention in Phoenix, right next door to that of the Episcopal Church. For those who don't know, the Metropolitan Church is the new denomination for 'homosexual' churches. There will be many homosexuals in attendance at our convention who will add to the presence of homosexuals who would normally attend. We need large numbers of Orthodox, believing Episcopalians to offset the impact of what will be a powerful homosexual presence."

Department of People of Color: Sockhop!

An all-star cast of celebrities from the 1950's will appear at the Fifties Sock Hop at General Conference XV.

Everyone is invited to step back into "the era of poodle skirts and Dippity-Do hairdos" by dressing up and attending the Sock Hop, which is sponsored as a fundraiser by the Department of People of Color and by White People Healing Racism.

A wide variety of MCCers have agreed to perform lipsynch versions of their favorite Fifties stars. They include: Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey as Patsy Cline, Rev. Ed Sherriff as the Big Bopper, Rev. Elder Freda Smith as Rosemary Clooney, Rev. Charlotte Strayhorn as Lavern Baker, Brenda Blizzard as Elvis Presley, Troy Fernandez as Sam Cook, Shedrick Wise as Fats Domino, Rev. Steve Torrance as Jerry Lee Lewis, Colette Jackson as Little Richard, and Jeremy Johnson as Chubby Checker. This extravaganza will be captured on videotape, and made available as a fundraiser.

The Sock Hop will happen on Monday, July 15 after the evening worship service. A donation of $3 per person or $5 per couple will be requested at the door.

Other events held by DPOC/WPHR include:

July 13, 1991 -- 1 - 1:45 pm: General Gathering of DPOC/WPHR Discussion regarding purpose and activies.
2 - 4 pm: "Tongues Untied" (Video)
2 - 4 pm: Womyn Only - Safer Sex
4:15 - 5:30 pm: Round-table discussion - How to mobilize our work.
7:30 pm: Ecumenical Worship (sponsored by DPOC and by the Department of Ecumenical Witness & Ministry.

July 15, 1991 -- AFTER WORSHIP: Fundraiser for DPOC/WPHR: 50's Sock Hop

July 17, 1991 -- Department of People of Color Awards Luncheon: Tickets will be sold at the registration desk through Tuesday (July 16) for $20 each. This luncheon is sponsored by the Department for recognition of those persons of outstanding achievements in their work with the Department and in UFMCC.

July 18, 1991 -- 2:15 - 3:45 pm: Building a Rainbow Denomination

July 19, 1991 -- 1 - 2:30 pm: The Language of Women of Color for all Peoples

All other DPOC or WPHR workshops are closed respectively to people of color or white people. Just check your conference program.

General Conference XV
Samaritan College Courses and Seminars

Tuition Schedule

Credits	*Class Hours*	*Tuition*	*Auditing Fee*
1	12	$85.00	$40.00
1/2	6	$42.50	$20.00

Courses and seminars are open to all. There is a 6-student minimum for course presentation. There are no charges for seminars.

The registration form and fee must be returned to the Samaritan College Administration Office by Friday, 5 July 1991. Tuition must be paid in full by the beginning of class. Questions on advance assigments must be directed to the course faculty.

Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____ *City:* _____

State/Province: _____ *Country:* _____ *Postal Code:* _____

Telephone: _____ *Evening:* _____ *Fax:* _____

District: _____ *Church:* _____

Course Title(s) _____

Credit Status: (Please check one)

☐ Seeking degree ☐ Seeking licensure ☐ Audit ☐ Continuing Ed

Have you ever taken a Samaritan course before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ District Conference Seminar When? _____ Which District? _____

☐ L. A. Campus ☐ District/Samaritan Partnership ☐ Correspondence course

☐ Other _____

Amount Enclosed: $ _____

Visa/MasterCard # _____ Signature _____

General Conference XV/Samaritan College Courses

Sexual Ethics *(2 credits)*
Wednesday–Friday, 10–12 July, 10:00 am–5:00 pm
With Sherre Boothman and Ken Martin

Fills sexuality studies elective toward degree and earns a continuing education unit. *Attendence is required all three days; no exceptions.*

Advance assignment:
Nelson, James B., *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1978), 303 pp.

Recommended reading:
Miller, Alice, *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty In Child Rearing and the Roots of Violence* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York, 1983), 282 pp.

Miller, Alice, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child* (Meridian, N.Y., 1984), 329 pp.

Money, John, *Gay, Straight and In-Between*

Biblical Exegesis and Interpretation *(1 credit)*
Thursday–Friday, 11–12 July, 10:00 am–5:00 pm
With Tom Bohache.

Fulfills Biblical studies credit toward degree; study tool for writing exegesis paper toward licensure; continuing education unit.

Advance Assignment:
Read assigned text before start of class; bring any commentary on the Gospel of Matthew or a one-volume commentary on the Bible.

Text: Thompson, William, *Preaching Biblically : Exegesis & Interpretation* (Abingdon, Nashville, 1981), 128 pp.

A Christian Introduction to the Women's Movement (½ credit)
Wednesday, 10 July, 10:00am - 5:00pm
With Freda Smith

Earns a continuing education unit

General Conference XV/Samaritan College Seminars

Men Together: A Forum on Male Sexuality
Saturday, 13 July, 9:00 am–12:00 noon
With Nathan Meckley and Jim Mitulski

All men are welcome and are invited to attend this forum offered to promote discussion and reflection on issues of mutual interest and concern for men in UFMCC.

Homosexuality and the Scriptures
Wednesday, 17 July, 10:00–11:30 am & 1:00–2:30 pm
Friday, 19 July, 1:00–2:30 pm
With Bob Arthur

Fulfills Biblical studies elective toward degree and earns a continuing education unit. For credit: One must write a paper, due on 1 September. (1 credit)

El Sexo, La Biblia, Y El Fundamentalismo Ideologico
In Spanish: Thursday, 18 July, 2:15–3:45 pm
With Dr. Thomas Hanks, Ph.D.

Ten basic principles for the correct use of Scriptures in the development of sex-positive sexual ethics.

Sex, the Bible, and Ideological Fundamentalism
In English: Thursday, 18 July, 4:00–5:30 pm
With Dr. Thomas Hanks, Ph.D.

Ten basic principles for the correct use of Scriptures in the development of sex-positive sexual ethics.

General Conference Faculty

Bob Arthur, M.A., Correspondence Course Administrator, Los Angeles, California
Thomas Bohache, B.A., Pastor, MCC of the Blue Ridge, Roanoke, Virginia
Dr. Sherre Boothman (Hon.), Pastor, MCC in the Valley, North Hollywood, California
Dr. Thomas Hanks, Professor of Extended Studies in Latin America, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Ken Martin, M.A., Sexuality Studies, Los Angeles, California
Nathan Meckley, M. Mus., UFMCC Staff, Los Angeles, California
Jim Mitulski, M. Div., Pastor, MCC San Francisco, California
Dr. Freda Smith (Hon.), Pastor, River City MCC Sacramento, California; Elder, UFMCC

UFMCC Commission on Faith, Fellowship, and Order

The Rev. Steven M. Torrence, Chair

June 1991
Greetings in the name of our Lord, Jesus The Christ.

The Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission is alive, well and working. To better inform you of 'what's happening' within the commission, it was thought that the following would be of interest.

We invite you to participate in the General Conference workshops sponsored by FFO and the plenary session.

Thursday, July 18th

10:00 am - 11:30 am	"Confronting Grief and Loss"
2:15 pm - 3:45 pm	Why Are We Here?: focus on the UFMCC Mission Statement
2:15 pm - 3:45 pm	Theology of Ordination: focus on The Rite of Ordained Clergy

Saturday, July 20th

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm A plenary session in which selected people share their understanding and interpretation of The UFMCC Mission Statement. There will be time for full group discussion.

Stop by the Church Services booth at The Country Store to purchase your copy of "The Manual" - a complete manual for workshop leaders and leaders of discussion groups. This is a 104-page manual that will help answer your questions about group leadership and group dynamics.

Program Activities/Progress during Reporting Period:

Since our last General Conference XIV in St. Paul, the Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission has revitalized itself in order to once again become a vibrant and alive program of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We have been able to accomplish this by all of your support and prayers. The commission met for its annual meeting in July 1990 in Palm Springs, California. Southern California was chosen due to its proximity to Elders. Clergy and Lay Reps throughout the U.S. and Canada attended as well as Brenda Blizzard from Excel International, the Rev. Stephen Pieters, Field Director, Elder Larry Rodriguez and Rev. Elder Don Eastman.

The annual meeting was a meeting of rebirth. We discussed FFO's real activities in the various districts over the last couple of years. From this exchange, we learned that, although underfunded, there was a great need and desire to maintain and revitalize FFO in all the districts that were represented. It was clear that the district representatives were willing and eager to put time and effort into seeing FFO continue to be revitalized and renewed. Through this discussion, we formulated what our priorities as a commission should be for the next year. These priorities are the UFMCC's Mission Statement, continuing towards the development of a Theology of Ordination, continued work on Theology of Sexuality, revamping and updating the FFO Notebook and the FFO Workshops. In order to accomplish this, we broke into small working groups for our annual meeting. I am pleased to report that there has been and continues to be progress in each of these areas since our annual meeting. We are very pleased that, at this General Conference, there is a two hour forum on the Mission Statement. We invite all of you to attend the forum on Saturday the 20th, entitled "Why Are We Here: Focus on the UFMCC Mission Statement." This plenary forum represents diversity among our denomination and looks to be very enlightening and challenging. FFO has developed a district and local church workshop on the Mission Statement, which is an excellent tool to glean information from our churches and districts and to stimulate discussion.

As you will note at St. Paul's General Conference, FFO was asked to develop or at least work on a Theology of Ordination and we agreed that one of our tasks was to begin this process. In response to this request, a survey was prepared entitled "Toward a Theology of Clergy and Laity: Perceptions of Ministry," which was distributed to all chartered and commissioned churches and to all lay delegates and clergy.

The task we set for ourselves in regards to the revision of the FFO Notebook is proceeding with the reviewing of individual workshops, study series, position papers, and analyzing and assessing workshops where needed and the developing and fine tuning of new FFO resources.

Available at the church services booth is a manual for workshop leaders and leaders of discussion groups by Mr. Sean-Patrick Hogan, FFO Rep from the Great Lakes District. This 104 page manual is an excellent tool and contains such a wealth of information that people in a wide variety of group situations may benefit from this manual. Works continues in the area of Theology of Sexuality with a survey on Transexuality and Faith by the Rev. Dr. Charles M. Bidwell, Ph.D.

1215 Petronia Street, Key West, FL 33040
(305) 294-8912

A major area of work has been our involvement with the National Council of Churches (NCC) Commission on Faith and Order (COFO). In the October meeting of the NCC COFO, the Rev. Janet Pierce and Chuck Russell-Coons were present to represent our denomination. Chuck was on hand for the actual presentation of the book, The Church with AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis. This wonderful piece of work was dedicated to the late Rev. Ron Russell-Coons. In the preface of The Church with AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis, the co-chairs of the Commission on Faith and Order state: "The particular focus on AIDS represented by this book has its origin in the case study presented to the study group in 1986 by Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) liaisons Jenny Boyd Bull and Janet Pierce. Further contributions were made by Ron Russell-Coons, a person living with AIDS who joined the study group in 1988. Because we focused on AIDS, using the experience of our MCC members at the point of entry, the bulk of our material for reflection centered on the experience of gay, white males living with AIDS. This was, therefore, our primary base for seeking clues from which to develop an understanding of the church in light of the AIDS crisis." They go on to say, "As cochairs we wish to express our appreciation to all the members of the study group for their faithful work, and particularly to Letty Russell for undertaking the role of Editor. We give special thanks for the presence and efforts of Ron Russell-Coons. His willingness to devote so much energy to the development of this book at a time when his own struggle with AIDS so greatly taxes his strength is an example of generosity and grace for which we all are deeply grateful."

This is a major piece of work with the National Council of Churches, not only Ron Russell-Coons, but Jim Mitulski and Kit Cherry. Also used in the book was the hymn "We Are The Church Alive," with text by the Rev. Jack Hoggatt-St. John and the Rev. David Pellitier. This volume represents years of work and struggle. This book is available during General Conference at the UFMCC Church Services booth. I understand the presentation of the book went very well.

Our feeling is that we need to continue our presence with the National Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order. Currently, they are dealing with racism. I believe that we will have a great impact with the Commission on Faith and Order in the area of racism, as we did with AIDS. The Rev. Kit Cherry has been hired as field director of Ecumenical Witness, as of January 1st, so FFO will no longer be directly involved with COFO. This now falls under the purview of Ecumenical Witness.

The wonderful program developed by Sean-Patrick Hogan and Rev. Larry Fay from the Great Lakes District has revitalized and provided a source of revenue for the district FFO work. They have put on a number of conferences in which a wide variety of theological topics are discussed. Topics ranging from the walk on the water syndrome, the dysfunctional church, Inclusivity and People of Color, to call to order: interpersonal skills and communication, and Create-A-Culture. It is apparent that people, when given the opportunity, enjoy talking theology and challenging and being challenged.

Additional Programs Activity/Progress Expected by the End of this Year:
By the end of 1991, we should have completed and tabulated the results of the survey, "Toward a Theology of Clergy and Laity: Perceptions of Ministry." We will have gathered information on the Mission Statement through the General Conference and District Conference. It is hoped that the notebook will be closer to complete revision. Considering the funding level of this program, I believe that great strides have been made and there has been much work accomplished.

In closing, I would like, on behalf of the entire FFO Commission, to thank the General Conference for their continued support and funding. We as a Commission can only be as active as you allow us to be. It is urged that you support budget requests at the district level so that we can further and continue this vital work. Thanks also must go to the staff at headquarters for all their assistance, support and the other programmers who have attended our meetings and given us encouragement and wonderful guidance. A special thanks to the General Council for their direction, support, encouragement and for the opportunity to continue the work of Faith, Fellowship and Order.

News From District Conferences

Many districts held their District Conferences during the past month. Here are some highlights from these recent conferences:

Gulf Lower Atlantic District - Hosts Biggest Conference

The Gulf Lower Atlantic District had its largest district conference ever. Nearly 300 people registered for the conference held in Atlanta in late April, and 500 people attended Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Mr. Jay Neely, GLAD District Coordinator, said one reason for the high attendance was the efforts made to invite women from the National Lesbian Conference that by coincidence happened to be held in Atlanta at the same time.

"We saw that as a real opportunity to build bridges. That's something I believe in adamantly," he said. "We made a real effort to reach out to the sisters."

This effort included putting an ad in the program booklet for the lesbian conference promoting the Sunday morning sermon by Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson at the District Conference. Its eye-catching title was, "What's a Nice Lesbian Like Me Doing in a Church Like This?" The GLAD District purposely scheduled the sermon at a time when the lesbian conference schedule was open. The district also had a booth at the lesbian conference. At the same time, GLAD made arrangements to help MCC women attend parts of the lesbian conference.

This cooperative effort was made possible by women from MCC who attended the lesbian conference planning sessions. They included Rev. Marge Ragona, Rev. Janet Pierce, and Ms. Judy McVey.

Eastern Canadian District - Elects New Coordinator

Ms. Lydia Segal was elected District Coordinator of the Eastern Canadian District at its District Conference May 17-19. Ms. Segal is a member of Christos MCC in Toronto, where her partner, Rev. Susan Mabey, is pastor. Raised in South Africa, Ms. Segal has been active in UFMCC for many years. Her term is effective immediately.

Also attending the conference was a representative from a group of about a dozen people in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who are considering affiliation with UFMCC. The nearest MCC church is in Boston, about 12 hours away by car. The group plans to call itself Safe Harbor MCC, choosing a name that relates to Halifax's excellent natural harbor.

Rev. Rod McAvoy, the outgoing district coordinator, reports that the conference's Sunday evening worship service was "a phenomenal time of spiritual renewal."

Northwest District - Raises Funds for Ruby House

More than $2,000 was raised at the Northwest District Conference to enable the continued operation of Ruby House, a residential home in Roseburg, OR, for people with AIDS. About 160 people registered for the conference, which was held May 12-13 and hosted by River of Life MCC in Richland, WA, and many more attended worship services.

Rev. Ed Sherriff, district coordinator, reports that district business was conducted in only 4½ hours this year, compared to 11 hours last year. He says business was conducted more efficiently because pre-conference information was mailed early and pre-conference forums were held.

South Central District Conference - Successes Reported

As the South Central District gathered for its District Conference May 17-19, the entire district looked back over the past year and saw signs of growth.

"We now have five new congregations, and a 10½ percent increase in total district membership accompanied by increased worship attendance and financial support, and new programming," SWD District Coordinator Clarke Friesen said in his annual report.

He attributed the growth to "the overwhelming presence of God's Holy Spirit" at the previous district conference and the formation of a District Church Extension Board.

Western Canadian District - Makes Waves

The Western Canadian District had a productive District Conference May 17-19 in Winnipeg. Rev. Bev Baptiste, district coordinator, said that long-range planning and preparation for General Conference were accomplished. MCC members also joined other gay and lesbian organizations in greeting (drag) Queen Victoria at a barbecue celebrating the Canadian holiday, Victoria Day. Rev. Baptiste said the queen made no official remarks. "She just did the queenly wave thing."

Positions Available

District Coordinator Vacancy - The term of office for the Mid-Atlantic District Coordintor position expires in Spring 1992. The District Committee is currently seeking applications for this full-time salaried position. Persons can indicate their interest by contacting Rev. Darlene Garner, Assistant District Coordinator, at MCC NOVA, 7245 Lee Highway, Falls Church, VA 22046 by August 30, 1991.

Pastoral Vacancy - MCC Edmonton, Albera Canada is seeking a pastor. For further information reply to the following address: MCC Edmonton, Pastoral Search Committee, P.O. Box 1163, Edmonton, Alberta Canada T5J 2M4.

The Hymnal Project

The first two years of The Hymnal Project are coming to a successful close. The remaining sets will be mailed to subscribers by the end of June, in time to kick off Year Three at General Conference. Nearly one hundred congregations have ordered all or part of the Project, including a number of churches from outside the Fellowship. More than 450 hymns and songs have been made available, all in inclusive language and completely copyright-legal.

The first two sets of music assembled especially for small churches are now available. Set Y is made up of popular and simpler selections from the first two years of the Project. Set Z is an all-new set of songs, rounds and choruses that larger churches might want to try also. These sets are available for $15 each, or both for $25.

The complete Year One (Sets A-H) and Year Two (Sets I-P) are available for $100 per year, or for $15 per individual set. First year subscribers who never got around to renewing for Year Two are encouraged to do so before Conference. All sets are in stock now and ready for mailing. Address all orders to: The Hymnal Project, c/o MCC San Francisco, 150 Eureka Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Checks should be payable to MCC San Francisco.

The Hymnal Project invites all churches in the Fellowship to meet with us in Phoenix. We will have a table in the Country Store with all of our sets from the first two years available for sale. Plans for Year Three will be announced at a presentation on Thursday, July 18. Please stop by and see how your congregation can help in this effort toward a denominational hymnal for UFMCC.

Women's Secretariat Survey

Included in this issue of "Keeping In Touch" is an important survey for all women from the UFMCC Women's Secretariat. The Secretariat is asking all Pastors to announce this survey in your next church service and for Board Clerks to copy this survey and distribute it to ALL women members of your congregations. Please help us get this survey out to all women as soon as possible since the results will be presented at General Conference.

The Women's Secretariat meeting at General Conference will be from 9:00 am to 12 noon, Saturday, July 13. All women are welcome to attend.

APRIL, 1991
Top 20 Tithes

1.	MCC Dallas	Dallas, TX	$2415.29
2.	Church/Holy Spirit MCC	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1949.45
3.	MCC of the Resurrection	Houston, TX	1904.10
4.	MCC Washington	Washington, DC	1726.21
5.	MCC San Francisco	San Francisco, CA	1504.50
6.	MCC Toronto	Ontario, CAN	1463.07
7.	First MCC of Kansas	Wichita, KS	1180.14
8.	King of Peace MCC	St. Petersburg, FL	1136.74
9.	River City MCC	Sacramento, CA	992.37
10.	MCC in the Valley	N. Hollywood, CA	886.23
11.	Agape MCC	Ft. Worth, TX	804.63
12.	MCC Austin	Austin, TX	744.08
13.	New Life MCC of Tidewater	Norfolk, VA	710.83
14.	St. Luke's MCC	Jacksonville, FL	677.52
15.	Christos MCC	Toronto, Ontario, CAN	674.20
16.	MCC Key West	Key West, FL	609.43
17.	Church of the Trinity MCC	Sarasota, FL	550.49
18.	MCC San Antonio	San Antonio, TX	500.58
19.	Trinity MCC	Arlington, TX	497.62
20.	MCC New York	New York, NY	451.78

APRIL, 1991
Top 20 Per Capita

1.	Eternal Light MCC	Olympia, WA	67.66
2.	New Life MCC	Berkeley, CA	50.33
3.	Whitewater Valley MCC	Richmond, IN	34.37
4.	MCC of Northern Virginia	Falls Church, VA	33.18
5.	MCC New York	New York, NY	28.93
6.	MCC Detroit	Roseville, MI	28.15
7.	Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert	Palmdale, CA	26.83
8.	MCC Edmonton	Alberta, CAN	26.56
9.	Resurrection Chapel/So Bay	Torrance, CA	26.00
10.	Church of the Trinity MCC	Sarasota, FL	25.58
11.	Trinity MCC	Arlington, TX	23.28
12.	MCC of the Disciples	Washington, DC	22.59
13.	Vision of Hope MCC	Lancaster, PA	22.59
14.	Calvary MCC	Redwood City, CA	22.42
15.	MCC Rockville	Rockville, MD	22.08
16.	MCC of the Siskiyous	Medford, OR	21.59
17.	MCC of the Spirit	Harrisburg, PA	21.19
18.	SisterSpirit	Portland, OR	20.75
19.	Christos MCC	Toronto, Ontario, CAN	20.49
20.	MCC Santa Barbara Cty	Santa Barbara, CA	19.76

UFMCC Plants New Church in France

UFMCC has a new work in Paris, France. The group, formerly known as Christ the Liberator and pastored by the late Joseph Douce, decided to become a new work with UFMCC on April 28. The group is pastored by Ms. Caroline de Blanco, who is pursuing UFMCC licensure.